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Russia strikes Ukraine with strategic missile. Day 1007 of the war

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The situation on the frontline

Under pressure from the advancing Russians, Ukrainian forces are gradually withdrawing from their salient south of Kurakhove. Russia's troops have crossed the road connecting them to this town and entered its centre, which is currently contested. The town **has thus lost its importance as a logistics hub of the Ukrainian grouping west of Donetsk**. It should be considered highly likely that Kurakhove will also be abandoned once the defenders have been evacuated from salient, despite the fact that Russia has failed to cut the road to the west by which the connection to Pokrovsk is maintained.

The Russians entered Velyka Novosilka from the east, but did not advance deep into the town. The road connecting it to Pokrovsk came under their fire control, significantly lengthening Ukraine's supply lines. The roads to the Dnipropetrovsk (to the north) and Zaporizhzhia (to the west) oblasts, which remain under Ukrainian control, are also under threat – attacking enemy troops are about 3 km from both of them.

Russia continues to advance across a broad front south of Pokrovsk, but still has not reached the last road south from that city (it has advanced 2 km in a week). It has also made further ground advances on other directions in the Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, but these have not changed the overall situation.

Ukrainian forces halted the Russian advance in the north-eastern part of Kupiansk (fighting is taking place in the industrial zone). Russia has expanded its holdings on its outskirts and around the Oskil River crossing to the south. It is also continuing to push Ukraine back from the east bank of the Zherebets River on the border of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts.

Russia crossed the border into the Kozacha Lopan area of Kharkiv Oblast, most likely with the intention of sabotaging the left wing of the enemy grouping north of Kharkiv. According to some sources, they are preparing or have led an attack in this area, which was denied by the Ukrainians. The subsequent advance of Russian forces in Kursk Oblast remains unaffected by the overall situation. Kyiv has admitted to losing 40% of its August gains.

Russian air attacks

On 21 November, Russia launched a massive attack on the critical and industrial infrastructure of the city of Dnipro, using, according to the Ukrainian Air Force Command, nine missiles, including the Kinzhal hypersonic missile and the Oreshnik medium-range ballistic missile (more on the Oreshnik below). Local authorities confirmed damage at the Pivdenmash plant, now one of the main repair centres and assembly plants for armaments and military equipment.

Russia's main target remains critical infrastructure and logistics of Ukraine's forces behind the frontline. In addition to Dnipro, attacks took place in Kharkiv (19 and 25 November), Sumy (19 and 22 November), Kryvyi Rih (21 November), Zaporizhzhia (22 and 24 November) and Odesa (25 November). Damage was also reported from the Kyiv (officially as a result of falling drone debris, 20 and 24 November) and Mykolaiv (25 November) oblasts. **On 26 November, Russian missiles struck the energy infrastructure in Ternopil**, resulting in a temporary disruption of the electricity and water supply.

On the night of 26 November, another record was set for the number of strike drones used by Russia – 188. Between the evening of 19 November and the morning of 26 November, the Russians are thought to have used a total of 642 of them, with the Ukrainian army reporting none used by them on 21 and 23 November. On 23 November, no missile attack was reported either – the first time this had happened since 11 January. 317 drones were said to have been destroyed and 284 were considered locally lost, which Kyiv said could be due to the impact of electronic warfare systems. At the same time, 32 missiles were thought to have hit targets in Ukraine, with Ukraine declaring that ten had been shot down.

Ukrainian operations against Russia

On 20 November, the Ukrainians attacked an underground command post at a facility in Marino, Kursk Oblast, belonging to the Russian presidential administration, using British Storm Shadow cruise missiles. According to Western sources, a North Korean general was wounded. However, reports of the death of the deputy commander of the Leningrad Military District, General Valery Solodchuk, have not been confirmed. According to Ukrainian military intelligence (HUR), a strike on the command post of the Russian 'North' grouping in the Belgorod region was also supposed to have taken place on the same day. There is no information on its results.

On 25 November, HUR reported a successful drone attack on a fuel base in the Kaluga region. Other sources claim that a refinery and/or the Typhoon plant (which manufactures equipment for the Russian Navy, among other things) in Kaluga were attacked. The Ukrainians also hit the Kursk airfield, but no information was provided about the impact.

One day earlier an S-400 system radiolocation station was thought to be hit in a missile strike on Kursk Oblast, as reported by the General Staff of the Ukrainian army. The possibility of Ukraine officially using Western missiles to attack targets in Russia has resulted in a number of reports of their use (published mainly by the Russian channel Astra, which is considered independent of the Kremlin), but these are difficult to verify.

Western support for Ukraine

On 20 November, the US Department of Defense released details of its 70th military assistance package, worth $275 million. Under the Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA), HIMARS guided missiles, 155 mm and 105 mm calibre artillery ammunition, Javelin and TOW anti-tank guided missiles, AT-4 anti-tank grenade launchers and drones, among others, will be transferred from US army warehouses. On the same day, **Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin confirmed that the US had transferred anti-personnel mines to Kyiv**.

Also on 20 November, Germany updated its list of deliveries to Ukraine with previously announced armaments and military equipment. These include four PzH 2000 self-propelled gun-howitzers and 40,000 155 mm calibre artillery shells, 47 MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) armoured vehicles, a TRML-4D radar for the IRIS-T air defence system and 214 reconnaissance drones of various types (120 Songbird, 100 RQ-35 Heidrun, 60 Golden Eagle, 20 Vector, 12 Hornet XR and 2 VT-4 Ray). On 24 November, the Bild daily revealed that **26 of the 400 MRAP vehicles promised this year have arrived in Ukraine**, with the German defence ministry planning to hand over 150–200 by the end of the year and the remainder in 2025.

On 19 November, Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen stated in Kyiv that Ukraine had received six of the 19 pledged F-16s from Denmark. This means that two more aircraft of this type have arrived there in autumn (four were received in August). A day later, **the last two of 18 Dutch F-16 fighters arrived at a Ukrainian pilot training centre in Romania**, Sky News TV reported. According to earlier reports, the Netherlands was due to provide Kyiv with 24 machines of this type.

Russia's military potential

In the strike on the Pivdenmash plant on 21 November, Russia deployed a new medium-range ballistic missile, the Oreshnik, for the first time in an experimental-combat mode. The attack was a political demonstration without much military significance (see '*Kremlin escalates threats against the West*'). The city of Dnipro is within the de facto range of all ballistic and cruise missiles used by Russia to date, and those that hit Pivdenmash are unlikely to have done significant damage. A MIRV (Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle) payload was used, in which each of the six warheads separated into a further six kinetic projectiles (without explosive charge), with the standard version containing nuclear warheads.

According to US data, the Oreshnik was based on the RS-26 Rubezh intercontinental ballistic missile, and HUR reported that it was fired from a mobile launcher of the newly developed Kedr system from the Kapustin Yar training ground. The Rubezh did not make it out of the prototype phase (testing began in 2011, the programme was officially closed in 2018), and its relatively small range for an intercontinental ballistic missile (5,800 km) indicates that it was de facto being developed as an medium or intermediate range missile. This is prohibited by the Comprehensive Elimination of Short and Intermediate-Range Missiles Treaty (INF; it covers missiles with a range of 500 km to 5,500 km), from which the

US – aware of the Russian Federation's violations of its provisions – formally withdrew in 2019. HUR believes that Russia currently has two launchers of the Kedr system and at most ten Oreshniks.

The user of the nominally conventional Oreshnik missile is thought to be the Strategic Rocket Forces – the main component of the Russian nuclear triad. Above all, they have gained a dangerous new competence – the ability to carry out strategic missile attacks of a special operations nature in conflicts below the threshold of global nuclear war. The United States considered this solution after 11 September 2001 (the use of ballistic missiles on nuclear submarines was planned), but Washington chose not to implement it unilaterally (Moscow did not agree to renegotiate the treaties at the time).

On 21 November, the State Duma adopted the draft federal budget for 2025 (see '*Russia's budget for 2025: war above all*'). Spending will be higher for another year in a row, mainly due to outlays for national defence and internal security, which are growing at a double-digit rate. These two items, which are responsible for the needs of the army and maintaining control over society, will absorb more than 43% of the funds, with funds for the military also being concealed in other budget headings. Spending is set to rise to 41.5 trillion roubles (around $415 billion).

Ukraine's military potential

On 19 November, the Ukrainian parliament adopted the 2025 budget (see '*Ukraine: another difficult wartime budget*'). It envisages expenditure of 3.94 trillion hryvnias (about $95.5 billion), with the bulk of it – 2.2 trillion hryvnias (about $53.3 billion, more than 55% of the total) – to be spent on defence. Among the outlays in this sphere, funds for the purchase, modernisation and repair of armaments are crucial.

On 21 November, the parliament passed amendments to the law 'On military duty and military service'. They allow soldiers who have left military units arbitrarily for the first time to return to the army voluntarily with criminal proceedings waived. The adoption of this solution is one of the steps to support the rebuilding of the mobilisation potential of the armed forces.

On 22 November, **the commander of the 3rd Independent Assault Brigade (the former Azov Regiment), Andriy Biletsky, announced that the critical shortage of men on the front line should be solved by improving the training of new recruits**. In his view, to ensure quality combat training, the number of professional instructors should be increased – currently 80% of the staff at training centres are people who have not been in combat, which reduces the quality of training. They should be replaced by experienced non-commissioned officers and soldiers with extensive combat experience. According to Biletsky, training should optimally last four months.

On 25 November, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Oleksandr Syrskyi ordered the creation of a recruitment cell in each brigade. The innovation is expected to allow commanders to improve the organisation of conscription and speed up mobilisation, although the establishment of the new structures will require a large group of soldiers to be delegated. On 1 October, unit commanders were given the right to call up volunteers directly,

without having to contact military commissions.

Russian operations against Ukraine

On 22 November, HUR Deputy Chief Vadym Skibitskyi confirmed that in late December 2023, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation and the General Staff had developed a forecast of military and political developments in the world until 2045. **Included in it was a plan to divide Ukraine's territory into three parts:**

1. **"new regions of Russia"** (inclusion of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts as well as the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol in the Russian Federation),
2. **"pro-Russian state subjects"** (in the Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Poltava, Dnipropetrovsk, Odesa, Kirovohrad, Cherkasy and Zhytomyr oblasts),
3. **"disputed territories"** (Volyn, Rivne, Khmelnytskyi, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, Chernivtsi and Zakarpattia regions), whose future should be decided by Russia and other states, including Hungary, Poland and Romania.

It cannot be ruled out that the leaked document was actually crafted by the Russians as part of an influence operation to support opinions about the inevitability of Ukraine's collapse.

On 23 November, former Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Valerii Zaluzhnyi stated that the Russian side would not make breakthroughs at the front until 2027. According to him, the enemy has lost the ability to carry out operational tasks at a depth of 150–200 km. **It will therefore continue the tactic of the 'economic and moral destruction' of Ukraine. An important element of this is to carry out 'cognitive actions' aimed at discouraging the Ukrainians from further war and mobilisation.**

